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NEA/PPD FOR ROBIN SMITH AND DAVID BENZE

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TAGS: [KPAO](#) [PREL](#) [PREL](#) [IS](#) [LE](#) [EG](#)
SUBJECT: EGYPT MEDIA TRENDS: AUGUST 3, 2006

¶1. Summary. Headlines in opposition, pro-government and independent papers today focused on the escalation of the conflict, and Egypt's role in supporting Lebanon. Front-page photos in many papers included injured Lebanese women, parents carrying injured or deceased children, and world leaders, although two papers showed exceptionally biased photos of Bush and Blair and Israelis. One of the day's commentaries provided a new, balanced perspective of the cause of the conflict. End summary.

¶2. In the headlines. Papers focused on the escalation of the conflict and Egypt's role in supporting Lebanon. Pro-government daily, Al-Gomhouriya, used photos to create the image of Israelis celebrating in Lebanese deaths. The captions on its front page photos of two Jewish men playing instruments and a Lebanese family huddled over a corpse read, "Extremist Jews play music for the Israeli soldiers so they can enjoy the killing," and "A Lebanese family sitting on the ground, reciting the Koran over the corpse of a martyred family member." Opposition Al-Wafd's photos included one of Bush and Blair from the back, overlaid with the words "arrogance" on Bush's back and "follower" on Blair's.

Banner headlines, in red, decried, "The World is Turning its Back as Blair Announces War on Us, and We Weep and Recite the Koran over the Martyrs" (Al-Wafd); "Baalbak is in the line of fire. Special Israeli Forces Fire Randomly at Civilians" (Independent daily, Al Masry Al Yom); and "War Enters the Decisive Stage" (opposition daily, Al-Ahrar). The pro-government papers included headlines promoting Egypt's support to the people of Lebanon, such as, "Suzanne Mubarak Calls for an International Consciousness: Save Lebanon and its People" (pro-government, Rose al Youssef); "Egypt Works Toward a Close Ceasefire" (pro-government daily, Al-Akhbar); "Lahoud Expresses Gratitude to Egypt" and "Mubarak Dispatches Abul-Gheit on an Urgent Mission to Beirut to Confirm Egypt's Support to Lebanon in its Crisis" (pro-government daily, Al-Ahram).

¶3. In the commentaries. The majority of the commentaries expressed the same anger toward the US and Arab leaders that we have seen since the conflict began. However, one commentary expressed different, balanced sentiment. A senior writer in independent daily, Nahdet Misr, criticized as false those who think "that Arabs were deceived and tricked and that the peace process is dead." He argued that "it is difficult to consider the entire international community a bunch of evil deceivers" and wrote that the war on Lebanon, "while savage, will force the region to realize further the inevitability of peace." He blamed the war "not on the kidnapping of soldiers or Israel being an aggressor, but because peace was lacking between Lebanon and Israel and Lebanon failed to fight a diplomatic battle with Israel to regain its occupied land."

¶4. Public sentiment. During the past week, embassy personnel have experienced tough criticism from some close contacts based on the contacts' perceptions of the US position in the conflict. For example, one journalist, who is very friendly during normal times, called and pleaded that we tell Secretary Rice "not to come to Cairo," and asked, "Don't those people have TVs in their homes to

watch children being killed?" Another columnist and TV presenter, said, "Can't you tell your Americans to be marter? Why do they insist on killing children ith their own weapons and then proudly announcin it?" Many close contacts, also, do not wish to met in public and others have cancelled meetings.

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